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SENSATIONS, FEELINGS, EMOTIONS.

Part I.

By the Editor.

Children whose parents have little theoretic knowledge of the values of the various food-stuffs are often thoroughly nourished; their parents rely on what they call common sense; and the result is, on the whole, better than if scientific consideration were given to the family dietary. But this common sense has usually scientific opinion for its basis, though the fact may be forgotten, and when scientific opinion has become the ground-work of habit it is of more value, and works in a more simple way, than while it is still in the stage of experiment. In the same way it is a good thing to have such an acquaintance with the functions of human nature that we act on our knowledge unconsciously, and do not even know that we possess it. But if we have no such floating capital of cognisance we must study the subject, even if we have to make experiments. Most people suppose that the sensations, feelings and emotions of a child are matters that take care of themselves. Indeed, we are apt to use the three terms indiscriminately, without attaching very clear ideas to them. But they cover, collectively, a very important educational field, and though common sense, that is to say judgments formed upon inherited knowledge, often helps us to act wisely without knowing why, we shall probably act more wisely if we act reasonably.

Let us consider, first, the subject of sensations. We speak of sensations of cold, and sensations of heat, and sensations of pain, and we are quite right. We also speak of sensations of fear and sensations of pleasure, and we are commonly wrong. The sensations have their origin in impressions received by the several organs of sense—eye, tongue, nostrils, ear, the surface of the external skin—and are conveyed by the sensory nerves, some to the spinal cord and some to the lower region of the brain. Many sensations we know nothing

about; when we become aware of our sensations it is because communications are sent by nerve fibres, acting as telegraph wires, from the sensorium to the thinking brain, and this happens when we give our *attention* to any one of the multitudinous messages carried by the sensory nerves. The physiology of the senses is too complicated a subject for us to touch upon here, but it is deeply interesting, and perhaps no better introduction exists than Professor Clifford's little book, *Seeing and Thinking* (Macmillan). Now the senses are "The Five Gateways of Knowledge," to quote the title of a little book which many of us have used in early days; and a person is intelligent or otherwise in proportion as he is aware of and capable of forming judgments upon the sensations he receives. One caution is necessary: from the very first a child's sensations should be treated as matters of objective and not of subjective interest. Marmalade, for example, is interesting, not because it is "nice"—a fact not to be dwelt upon at all—but because one can discern in it different flavours and the modifying effect of the oil secreted in the rind of the orange. We shall have occasion to speak more of this subject later; but a very important piece of education is this of centring a child's interest in the objects which produce his sensations and not in himself as the receiver of these sensations.

The purpose of so-called object lessons is, to assist a child, by careful examination of a given object, to find out all he can about it by the use of his several senses. General information about the object is thrown in and lodges only because the child's senses have been exercised, and his interest aroused. Object lessons are a little in disfavour, just now, for two reasons. In the first place, miserable fragments are presented to the children which have little of the character of the object *in situ*, and are apt to convey inadequate, if not wrong, ideas. In the next place, object lessons are commonly used as a means to introduce children to hard words, such as opaque and translucent, which never become part of their living thought until they pick them up for themselves incidentally as they have need of them. But the abuse of this kind of teaching should not cause us to overlook its use. No child can grow up without daily object teaching, whether casual or of set purpose, and the more thorough this is the more intelligent and observant will he

become. It is singular how few people are capable of developing an intelligent curiosity about the most attractive objects, except as their interest is stimulated from without. The baby is a wonderful teacher in this matter of object lessons. To be sure his single pupil is his own small self, but his progress is amazing. At first he does not see any difference between a picture of a cow and the living animal; big and little, far and near, hard and soft, hot and cold are all alike to him; he wishes to hold the moon in his pinafore, to sit on the pond, to poke his finger into the candle, not because he is a foolish little person, but because he is profoundly ignorant of the nature of the contents of this unintelligible world. But how he works! he bangs his spoon to try if it produces sound; he sucks it to try its flavour; he fumbles it all over and no doubt finds out whether it is hard or soft, hot or cold, rough or smooth; he gazes at it with the long gaze of infancy, so that he may learn the look of it; it is an old friend and an object of desire when he sees it again, for he has found out that there is much joy in a spoon. This goes on with great diligence for a couple of years, at the end of which time baby has acquired enough knowledge of the world to conduct himself in a very dignified and rational way.

This is what happens under Nature's teaching, and for the first five or six years of his life everything, especially everything in action, is an object of intelligent curiosity to the child—the street or the field is a panorama of delight, the shepherd's dog, the baker's cart, the man with the barrow, are full of vivid interest. He has a thousand questions to ask, he wants to know about everything; he has, in fact, an inordinate appetite for knowledge. We soon cure all that: we occupy him with books instead of things; we evoke other desires in place of the desire to know; and we succeed in bringing up the unobservant man (and more unobservant woman), who discerns no difference between an elm, a poplar and a lime tree, and misses very much of the joy of living. By the way, why is it that the baby does not exercise with purpose his organ of smell? He screws up a funny little nose when he is taught to sniff at a flower, but this is a mere trick; he does not naturally make experiments as to whether things are odorous, while each of his other senses affords him keen joy. No doubt the little nose is involuntarily very active, but can

his inertness in this matter be an hereditary failing? It may be that we all allow ourselves to go about with obtuse nostrils. If so, this is a matter for the attention of mothers, who should bring up their children not only to receive, which is involuntary and vague, but to perceive odours from the first.

Two points call for our attention in this education of the senses; we must assist the child to educate himself on nature's lines, and we must take care not to supplant and crowd out nature and her methods with that which we call education. Object lessons should be incidental; and this is where the family enjoys so great an advantage over the school. It is almost impossible that the school should give any but set lessons, but this sort of teaching in the family falls in with the occurrence of the object. The child who finds that wonderful and beautiful object, a wasp's nest, attached to a larch-twig, has his object lesson on the spot from father or mother. The grey colour, the round symmetrical shape, the sort of cup and ball arrangement, the papery texture, the comparative size, the comparative smoothness, the odour or lack of odour, the extreme lightness, the fact that it is not cold to the touch. These and fifty other particulars the child finds out unaided, or with no more than a word, here and there, to direct his observation. One does not every day find a wasp's nest, but much can be got out of every common object, and the commoner the better, which falls naturally under the child's observation, a piece of bread, a lump of coal, a sponge. In the first place it is unnecessary in the family to give an exhaustive examination to every object; one quality might be discussed in this, another quality in that. We eat our bread and milk and notice that bread is absorbent, and we overhaul our experience to discover other things which we know to be absorbent also, and we do what we can to compare these things as to whether they are less absorbent or more absorbent than bread. This is exceedingly important: the unobservant person states that an object is light and considers that he has stated an ultimate fact: the observant person makes the same statement, but has in his mind a relative scale, and his judgment is of the more value because he compares it silently with a series of substances to which this is relatively light. It is important that children should learn to recognise

that high, low, sweet, bitter, long, short, agreeable, etc., etc., are comparative terms, while square, round, black, white, are positive terms, the application of which is not affected by comparison with other objects. Care in this matter makes for higher moral, as well as intellectual development: half the dissensions in the world arise from an indiscriminate use of epithets. "Would you say your bread, (at dinner,) was light or heavy?" The child would probably answer, "rather light." "Yes, we can only say that a thing is light by comparing it with others; what is bread light compared with?" "A stone, a piece of coal, of cheese, of butter of the same size." "But it is heavy compared with?" "A piece of sponge cake, a piece of sponge, of cork, of pumice," and so on. "What do you think it weighs?" "An ounce, an ounce and a half." "We'll try after dinner; you had better have another piece and save it," and the weighing after dinner is a delightful operation. The power of judging of weight is worth cultivating. We heard the other day of a gentleman who was required at a bazaar to guess the weight of a monster cake; he said it weighed twenty-eight pounds fourteen ounces, and it did, exactly. *Cæteris paribus*, one has a greater respect for the man who made this accurate judgment than for the well-intentioned but vague person, who suggested that the cake might weigh ten pounds. Letters, book parcels, an apple, an orange, a vegetable marrow, fifty things in the course of the day give opportunities for this kind of object teaching, *i.e.*, the power of forming accurate judgments as to the relative and absolute weight of objects by their resistance, which is perceived by our sense of touch, though opposed to our muscular force. By degrees the children are trained to perceive that the relative weights of objects depend upon their relative density, and are introduced to the fact that we have a standard of weight.

In the same way children should be taught to measure objects by the eye. How high is that candle-stick? How long and broad that picture-frame? and so on—verifying their statements. What is the circumference of that bowl? of the clock-face? of that flower-bed? How tall is so and so, and so and so? How many hands high are the horses of their acquaintance? Divide a slip of wood, a sheet of paper into halves, thirds, quarters by the eye; lay a walking stick

at right angles with another; detect when a picture, curtain, etc., hangs out of the perpendicular. This sort of practice will secure for children what is called a correct or true eye.

A quick and true ear is another possession that does not come by nature, or anyway, if it does, it is too often lost. How many sounds can you distinguish in a sudden silence out of doors. Let these be named in order from the less to the more acute. Let the notes of the birds be distinguished, both call-notes and song-notes; the four or five distinct sounds to be heard in the flow of a brook. Cultivate accuracy in distinguishing footfalls and voices; in discerning, with their eyes shut, the direction from which a sound proceeds, in which footsteps are moving. Distinguish passing vehicles by their sounds; as lorry, brougham, dog-cart. Music is, no doubt, the instrument *par excellence* for this kind of ear culture. Our readers will probably recollect an article, entitled *A Musical Baby*, which appeared in the *Parents' Review*. This little boy seemed to the present writer a most interesting object lesson, himself, as illustrating what can be done by ear culture. Mrs. Curwen's *Child Pianist* puts carefully graduated means for this kind of culture into the hands of parents; and, if a child never become a performer, to have acquired a cultivated and correct ear is no small part of a musical education.

We do not attach enough importance to the discrimination of odours, whether as a safeguard to health, or as a source of pleasure. Half the people one knows have nostrils which register no difference between the atmosphere of a large, and so-called "airy," room, whose windows are never opened, and that of a room in which a through current of air is arranged for at frequent intervals: and yet health depends largely on a delicate perception as to the purity of the atmosphere. The odours which result in diphtheria or typhoid are perceptible, however faint, and a nose trained to detect the faintest malodorous particles in food, clothing, or dwelling, is a panoply against disease to the possessor. Then odours enter more into those

> Sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,

which add so much to the sum of our happiness, because they unite themselves so readily with our purely incorporeal joys

by links of association. "I never smell woodruff without being reminded——" is the sort of thing we hear and say continually, but we do not trouble ourselves to realise that we owe a double joy to the odour of the woodruff (or it may be, alas! a reflected sorrow)—the joy of the pleasant influences about us when we pluck the flower, and the possibly more personal joy of that other time with which we associate it. Every new odour perceived is a source, if not of warning, of recurrent satisfaction or interest. We are acquainted with too few of the odours which the spring-time offers. Only this spring the present writer learned two peculiarly delightful odours quite new to her, that of young larch twigs, which have much the same kind and degree of fragrance as the flower of the syringa, and the pleasant musky aroma of a box-hedge. Children should be trained to shut their eyes; for example, when they come into the drawing-room and discover by their nostrils what odorous flowers are present, should discriminate the garden odours let loose by a shower of rain—

"Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it.

* * * *

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odourless,
It is for my mouth for ever, I am in love with it.

* * * *

The sniff of green leaves, and dry leaves, and of the shore, and dark-coloured sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn."

—The American poet has, perhaps, done more than any other to express the pleasure to be found in odours. This is one direction in which much remains to be done; we have not yet arrived even at a scale of odours, as of sound and of colour.

Flavour, again, offers a wide range for delicate discrimination. At first sight it would appear difficult to cultivate the sense of flavour without making a child more or less of a gourmand, but the fact is that the strong flavours which titillate the palate destroy the power of perception. The young child who lives upon milk-foods has, probably, more pleasure in flavour than the diner-out, who is *au fait* with the confections of a *cordon bleu*. At the same time one would prefer to make flavour a source of interest rather than

of sensuous pleasure to children: it is better that they should try to discern a flavour with their eyes shut, for example, than that they should be allowed to think or say that things are "nice" or "nasty." This sort of fastidiousness should be cried down. It is not well to make a child eat what he does not like, as that would only make him dislike that particular dish always, but to let him feel that he shows a want of self-control and manliness when he expresses distaste for wholesome food is likely to have a lasting effect.

We have barely touched on the sorts of Object Lessons, appealing now to one sense and now to another, which should come incidentally every day in the family. We are apt to regard a Red Indian as a quite uneducated person; he is, on the contrary, highly educated in so far as that he is able to discriminate sensory impressions, and to take action upon these in a way which is bewildering to the book-learned European. It would be well for parents to educate a child, for the first half-dozen years of his life at any rate, on "Red Indian" lines. Besides the few points we have mentioned, he should be able to discriminate colours and shades of colour; relative degrees of heat in woollen, wood, iron, marble, ice; should learn the use of the thermometer; should discriminate objects according to their degrees of hardness; should have a cultivated eye and touch for texture; should, in fact, be able to get as much information about an object from a few minutes' study as to its form, colour, texture, size, weight, qualities, parts, characteristics, as he could learn out of many pages of a printed book. We approach the subject by the avenue of the child's senses rather than by that of the objects to be studied, because just now we have in view the occasional test exercises, the purpose of which is to give thorough culture to the several senses. An acquaintance with nature and natural objects is another thing, and is to be approached in a slightly different way. A boy who is observing a beetle does not consciously apply his several senses to the beetle, but lets the beetle take the initiative, so to say, which the boy reverently follows: but the boy who is in the habit of doing daily sensory gymnastics will learn a great deal more about the beetle than he who is not so trained. Definite Object Lessons differ from these incidental exercises in that an object is in a manner exhausted

by each of the senses in turn and every atom of information it will yield got out of it. A good plan is to make this sort of a lesson a game, pass your object round—piece of bread, for example—and let each child tell some fact that he discovers by touch, another round by smell, again by taste, and again by sight. Children are most ingenious in this kind of game, and it affords opportunities to give them new words, as friable, elastic, when they really ask to be helped to express some discovery they have made. The children learn to think with exactitude too, to distinguish between friable and brittle for example, and any common information that is offered to them in the course of these exercises becomes a possession for ever. A good game in the nature of an object lesson, suitable for a birthday party, is to have a hundred small objects arranged on a table, unknown to the children, then lead the little party into the room, allow them three minutes to walk round the table and then, when they have left the room, let them write, or tell in a corner, the names of all the objects they recollect. Some children will easily get fifty or sixty.

No doubt the best and happiest exercise of the senses springs out of a loving familiarity with the world of nature, but the sorts of gymnastics we have indicated render the perceptions more acute and are greatly enjoyed by children. That the sensations should not be permitted to minister unduly to the subjective consciousness of the child is the great point to be borne in mind.

LESSONS BEFORE SCHOOL.

By R. Somervell, M.A.

(*Continued from page* 113.)

The second great instrument for training the understanding is English grammar. If much time is ultimately lost by not laying the foundation of arithmetic thoroughly, a far more grievous waste arises from the attempt to teach children the grammar of other languages before they are familiarized with the main facts of grammar and the terminology of the subject, in their own mother tongue. The main fault in the older English grammars was that they were not grammars of English, based upon a study of the mother tougue, but mere adaptations of Latin grammar to English, adaptations which often set facts and logic at defiance. Some modern grammars have avoided this blunder, but they too often sin by over-elaboration, and contain, along with elementary grammar, a great deal of matter that should be postponed to a later stage of education. Thus it happens too often that the whole subject looks dry and repulsive, that the teacher knows nothing about it, has probably never learnt it, and thinks that as he or she did without it, the rising generation may do the same. The fact is that it does not follow, because the teacher knows Latin and French and German, and never learnt any English grammar, that therefore her pupils do not need it. It is not certain in the first place that the teacher learnt those languages as easily or as scientifically as she might have done; and it is tolerably likely that she is a teacher because she picked up knowledge more quickly than the average children she must suppose she has to teach.

My own experience, both in teaching quite little boys who are only beginning Latin, as well as older boys who are, say, on the point of reading Cæsar, is this—that some knowledge of the grammar of their own language is an enormous gain, and gives them a sureness and thoroughness that the average boy can acquire in no other way. What, then, can a child from seven to ten years old be taught of grammar that shall be ultimately useful in all study of language, and shall be immediately interesting and valuable? I answer, without hesitation, he can be taught *How to tell the Parts of Speech.* This is the title of an admirable little book by Dr. Abbott,